HORTICULTURE

Newsletter

Nueces Master Gardeners Walk & Talk

The May "Walk & Talk" will be just in time for Mothers' Day. Flower arrangements from your garden. The Rose Soiree owner, LaToya Rodriguez, will demonstrate some creative designs for making a simple arrangement from common garden herbs, blooming plants and grasses. You won't want to miss that afternoon presentation on Sunday May 4th at 2:00 pm at the pavilion by the Earthkind beds in the Botanical Gardens. "May the 4th Be With Us" as we see the beauty in our own backyard!

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TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Gulf Coast Citrus Greening Quarantine

Angelina Bernardini1, Kevin Ong2, and Olufemi J. Alabi3

Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties are under a citrus greening quarantine to slow the spread of the disease. Citrus plants cannot be moved out of the quarantined counties. In October 2019, Brazoria and Galveston counties were included in the expansion of the Upper Gulf Coast citrus greening quarantine to prevent and slow the spread of this disease in Texas. The disease exists throughout the world; in the United States, it was first detected in Florida in 2005 and in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas in 2012. Fort Bend, Harris, and Montgomery counties have been under this quarantine since 2016. As of 2023, quarantined areas include all of Brooks, Cameron, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Kenedy, Starr, Willacy, and Zapata counties. Citrus plants purchased in the quarantined area must stay in the quarantined area.

What is citrus greening?

Citrus greening (CG), also known as Huanglongbing (HLB), a bacterial disease that infects citrus. It is spread by the Asian citrus psyllid. There is no known cure for HLB. In the United States, the disease has resulted in an approximate 72 percent decline in juice-orange fruit production and about a 21 percent decline in the fresh citrus market.

What do I look for?

A tree infected by citrus greening may have:

Asian citrus psyllid

- The adult is about the size of a toothpick tip (about 3 millimeters) and has a distinctive 45-degree angled posture when present on leaves (Fig. 1).
- Nymphs are smaller and yellow-orange. (Fig. 2) They feed on new growth and secrete a waxy substance (red arrows in Fig.3).

Leaves and Branches

- Leaves are blotchy, mottled, and yellowed (Fig. 4).
- Leaves may have raised veins with a corky appearance (Fig.5).

Fruit

- Leaves are blotchy, mottled, and yellowed (Fig. 6).
- Fruit tastes bitter but poses no health problems to humans.
- Fruit may be stunted or lopsided, remain green or partially green, and fall prematurely from the tree.

To learn more about citrus greening and other citrus-related quarantines, visit the Citrus Alert website or the Texas Department of Agriculture's Citrus Greening Quarantine webpage.

Figure 1

Figure 2. Source: N. Hummel, LSU AgCenter, bugwood.org

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6. Examples of abnormal fruit found in Florida.

Master Naturalists

Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program Annual Seed Planting Workday

Chad Huckabee, South Texas Master Naturalist
The Naturalist - ST-TMN Newsletter

Chapter members met at the Nueces Delta Preserve to provide volunteer service for the CBBEP Bird Habitat Restoration Project. The workday was held on Monday, March 17, from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m., with lunch provided by CBBEP.

Over the past several years, this project has been established to restore trees and shrubs for shorebirds that nest in trees. Current restoration efforts are focused on properties in the Rio Grande Valley. Sand, fertilizer, vermiculite, water, and thousands of 1.5 in. x 1.5 in. x 10 in. biodegradable seed tubes are unfolded and stacked vertically in milk creates. The soil mixture is then added to the tubes, and each tube is tamped down to create a semi-solid lower section so that the material will not fall out. The final step is to plant seeds and cover them with peat moss.

The milk crates are then transferred to the growing trays behind the Delta Education Building. The plants will continue to grow until fall, at which time they will be loaded up, transported to the Valley, and planted.

Seven chapter members were involved in this project.

Backyard Science

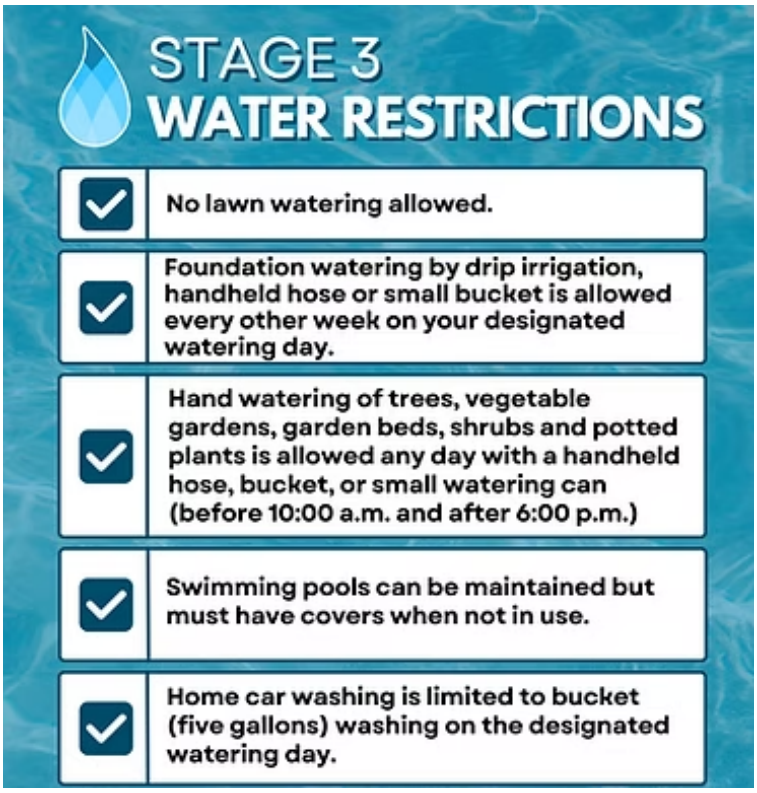
Chad Huckabee, South Texas Master Naturalist
The Naturalist - ST-TMN Newsletter

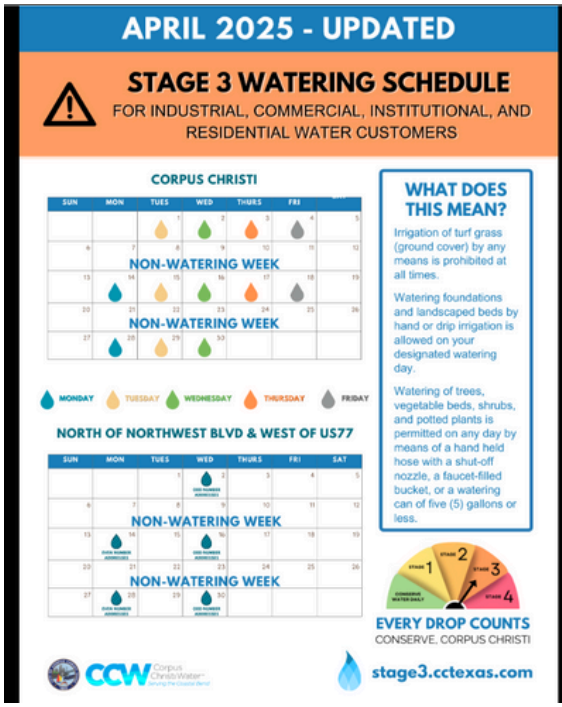
The Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History hosted "Backyard Science," a program in which various organizations and staff presented educational, hands-on activities for families attending the museum during the three-day period from March 13-15.

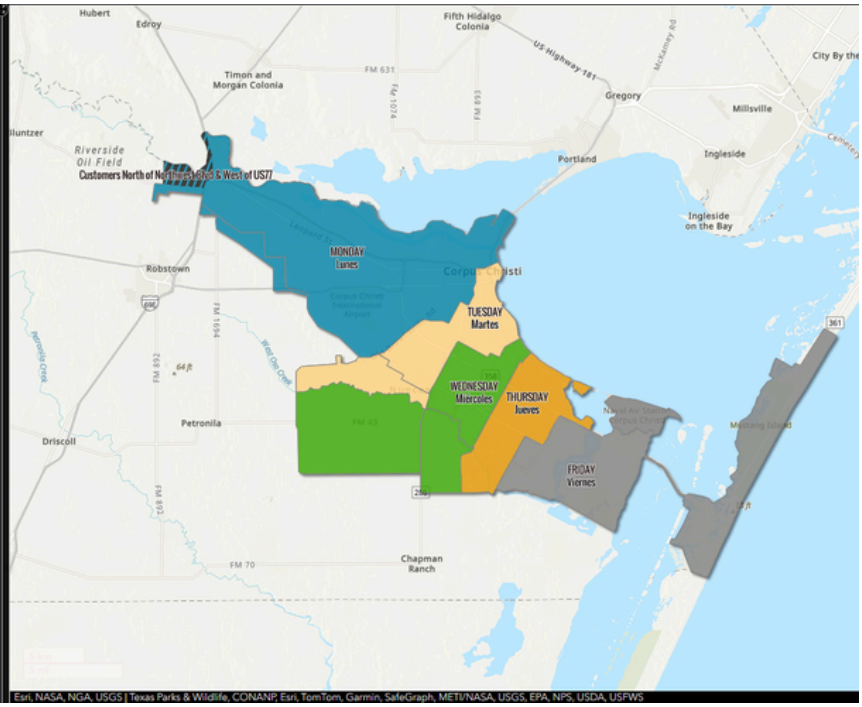
Chapter volunteers hosted our Critter Table, which had close to 600 visitors. Guests came from as far away as Arizona and Florida, as well as from all corners of Texas.

Stage 3 Water Restrictions Update

City of Corpus Christi - Corpus Christi Water







Texas Master Naturalist earns Conservation Wrangler designation

Statewide conservation nonprofit Texan by Nature recognizes program's impacts

April 3, 2025 - by Sarah Fuller

"The Texas Master Naturalist Program is one of five Texas-based initiatives recognized as a 2025 Texan by Nature Conservation Wrangler.

The designation recognizes and supports outstanding, science-based conservation efforts with demonstrated positive impacts for Texans and the state's natural resources.

Established in 1998 as a partnership between the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Texas Master Naturalist program is the first naturalist program of its kind in the nation to be implemented on a statewide scale.

The mission of the Texas Master Naturalist Program is the development of a corps of well-informed volunteers who provide education, outreach and service dedicated to the beneficial management of Texas' natural resources and natural areas within their local communities.

Recognition provides support to advance conservation impacts

Texan by Nature is a non-profit organization founded by former First Lady Laura Bush dedicated to advancing conservation that benefits people, prosperity and natural resources. Texan by Nature brings conservation and businesses together, acting as an accelerator for conservation groups and as a strategic partner for business.

Recipients of the Conservation Wrangler designation will receive 12-18 months of tailored support from the Texan by Nature team. This includes program management, strategic planning, marketing strategy, metrics capture and analysis, including the production of a Return on Conservation Index for select projects, and more.

"The Texas Master Naturalist Program just celebrated its 25th anniversary, and as we look toward the future, we recognize the need for a strategic plan that will serve as the foundation for guiding our next 25 years," said Mary Pearl Meuth, Texas Master Naturalist assistant state coordinator with AgriLife Extension.

"Developing a plan is essential to sustaining the program's momentum and addressing the increasingly complex conservation challenges facing Texas," Meuth said. "We're very fortunate and excited to collaborate with Texan by Nature."

Texas Master Naturalist projects seen across the state

Since its establishment, the Texas Master Naturalist Program has trained over 17,000 volunteers, stewarded more than 260,400 acres and engaged over 7.1 million Texans with natural resource education and outreach programs.

Currently, the program is comprised of 49 chapters serving 214 counties across the state.

Michelle Haggerty, Texas Master Naturalist Program state coordinator with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, said the recognition and support provided by the Conservation Wrangler designation will help the program amplify its already substantial impact.

"This effort is not just about maintaining the Texas Master Naturalist Program's legacy but about positioning it as a cornerstone of citizen-driven conservation for decades to come," Haggerty said.

6 Home Remedies For Killing Mealybugs

By: Gary Antosh

Plant Care Today

Mealybugs are tiny, soft-bodied, wingless insects covered in a soft grayish or white waxy protective layer.

These piercing, sucking, wax-covered insects are only about a fifth of an inch long, but they tend to congregate in massive colonies and suck the life out of plants.

What can you do about a mealybug infestation? In this article, we share smart home remedies to help you meet this threat to your plants.

What Damage Do Mealybugs Cause?

During the spring and summertime, mealybugs on plants can wreak havoc on outdoor plants. In the winter, they tend to move indoors to attack houseplants.

You'll know you have a mealybug problem if:

- You see fluffy white clusters of the pests on your plants
- You notice a sticky substance on or around your plants
- You see an unsightly black coating on your plants
- You find that ants are visiting your plants

A mealybug problem may start with a few individual bugs hiding in the crevices and under your plants' leaves. They can even be found in foliage, fruits, flowers, and roots.

If you fail to notice them, they will reproduce rapidly as the adult females lay eggs, and you will soon see them gathering en masse.

Their sticky secretions (honeydew) will collect on plants' leaves, stems, and surrounding surfaces if this lasts long.

Honeydew encourages the growth of black, sooty mold. It interferes with the plant's ability to access the light needed for photosynthesis.

Additionally, sweet, sticky honeydew attracts ants who come to gather it and carry it back to their burrows.

Ants also like to "farm" mealybugs by moving them around to the tips of plants' leaves so that they'll have greater access to plant sap. Ants may even "milk" mealybugs by squeezing them to cause them to excrete honeydew on demand.

If you pay close attention to your ornamental plants, you'll notice mealybugs in the early stages. This is when it is easiest to get rid of them and prevent damage.

6 Remedies On How To Get Rid Of Mealybugs Naturally

Keep Your Plants Healthy

Keeping plants healthy does not seem like much of a "remedy." But mealybugs and other pests are much more likely to infest weak, sickly host plants.

Whenever you plant anything, take the time to research the needs and proper care of the plant. Provide the right amount of sun, water, fertilizer, and air circulation to support your plant so that it can fight off pests.

Make Your Garden Attractive Solution To Beneficial Insects

Many good bugs like to make a meal of mealybugs, aphids, and other pests. Among the natural predators are ladybugs, Mealybug Destroyer (Cryptolaemus montrouzieri), **lacewings**, parasitic wasps, praying mantes, and more.

Also, mix a few of these plants into your garden to create a suitable habitat:

- White Clover
- Marigolds
- Rosemary
- Fennel

These plants will also attract butterflies, dragonflies, hummingbirds, and other beneficial yard and garden inhabitants.

Hose Your Plants Down Periodically

A strong spray of water can knock mealybugs to the ground. If you make a heavy shower a regular practice, you can knock out mealybugs before you notice their presence.

A stream of water discourages ants from bringing in mealybugs or enabling those that might already be in your garden.

Use Diatomaceous Earth (DE)

Dust your plants' leaves and stems lightly to kill mealybugs and ants.

Dust Diatomaceous Earth onto the soil surrounding your plants to discourage ants further.

Remember to replenish your DE after watering or after it rains.

Isolate Plants

If you see only a few mealybugs on individual indoor plants, isolate the plant and wipe them off with a paper towel or cotton swab dipped in isopropyl alcohol.

The rubbing alcohol will help kill any insects, including the larvae and eggs.

Keep an eye on that plant and repeat this treatment if new mealybugs appear.

Insecticides: Make A Homemade Mealybug Spray

Make a homemade mealybug spray (aka insecticidal soaps) by combining these ingredients:

- 4 tsp liquid dish soap (not detergent)
- 1 quart of water

Decant the mixture into a spray bottle and spray the soapy water on your affected plants generously. Spray the soil's surface as well. After two hours, rinse your plants well to dislodge any stragglers that may not have come in contact with the spray.

This spray is effective against all soft-bodied plant pests (e.g., whiteflies and aphids) and the hibiscus mealybug.

TIP: Always do a patch test before applying any treatment to your plant. Spray one leaf and wait at least an hour to be sure the plant is not sensitive to the treatment.

Another mealybug control is neem oil solution.

eem oil is a natural insecticide made from the seeds of the neem tree. You can use this for spraying the infested plants to control the mealybug.

Just combine 4 tablespoons of neem oil, 2 teaspoons of liquid soap, and a gallon of water.

The great thing about this solution is that it doesn't harm beneficial insects, and you don't have to resort to chemical pesticides.

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